

SITE NAME: Gibbs Woods

SITE NUMBER: CU4

SIZE: about 1325 acres

SITE SIGNIFICANCE: B (State)

LOCATION: Extreme northern portion of Currituck County; located north of the Northwest River and Tull Bay, west of SR 1251, and on both sides of SR 1250.

QUAD MAP: Creeds

#### SIGNIFICANT FEATURES:

1. The natural area contains a rare community type or subtype -- semi-evergreen oak/cane forest -- in an old meander channel. Much of the northern portion of the area contains a good example of Nonriverine Wet Hardwood Forest, of which the above type or subtype might be included as a variant. This forest is rather unusual in that it is located on an upland divide, rather than being in a single drainage basin.

2. The southern portion of the natural area contains extensive fresh to slightly brackish marshes and swamp forests, including remnant stands of Atlantic white cedar (Chamaecyparis thyoides).

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

The northern third of the natural area lies on a broad flat terrace that extends for many miles, northward into Virginia, north of Tull Bay. Running along the terrace in the natural area, and separating two upland flats, is a narrow former meander channel. The oaks that dominate this slight depression in the topography are semi-evergreen and feature laurel oak (Quercus laurifolia) and willow oak (Q. phellos) in the canopy, over a shrub layer dominated by giant cane (Arundinaria gigantea). This vegetation type fits no clear natural community in the Schafale and Weakley (1985) classification, but it might be treated as a variant of Nonriverine Wet Hardwood Forest. A small finger of swamp forest is present where SR 1251 crosses this slough or old channel; swamp tupelo (Nyssa biflora) is the dominant canopy tree.

Where SR 1250 bisects the natural area, a mature Nonriverine Wet Hardwood Forest is found on the terrace flats. This is a fairly typical example of this community, though American beech (Fagus grandifolia) is more common than usual in forests of this type in the A/P Study area. Also abundant is cherrybark oak (Quercus pagoda), with swamp chestnut oak (Q. michauxii) being numerous. White oak (Q. alba), red maple (Acer rubrum), and loblolly pine (Pinus taeda) are also present in the canopy. Beech is the main species in the understory layer. Beech tends to increase in frequency on the upland flats where fire has been suppressed, being more susceptible to fire than the oak species. Cherrybark oak tends to dominate on sites that are slightly drier than sites dominated by swamp chestnut oak.

The extensive swamp south of the terrace flats was not examined in detail. Portions contain stands of Atlantic white cedar (Chamaecyparis thyoides). This portion of the marshes that fringe Tull Bay and Northwest River were also not examined to any extent, but the quality of them appear good to excellent.